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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the television viewing behavior of a sample of 277 two- and three-year-old children, who were observed by their mothers as they watched a children's studio variety television program entitled "With Mother." The program consists of skits by performers disguised as animals, songs and games, exercises, an animation segment entitled "Kids Like Us," and films about daily life. Some of the children were also presented with monthly magazines carrying stories about the same eight characters appearing in the animation segment "Kids Like Us" in order to study any possible effects of a media mix. Researchers were particularly interested in the number of viewing hours per day, whether mothers watched the program with their children, the children's ages at the start of viewing the program, their mimicry of exercises shown, imitative role playing, their learning and understanding, their attitudes toward each segment of the program, their attention span, changes in their character preference in "Kids Like Us," their recognition of these characters, their reactions to the animation, and the effects of the magazines on their viewing behavior. It was concluded that the degree of understanding increased from two-and-a-half to three-year-olds. In addition, although the program was generally popular, "Kids Like Us" provoked a divided reaction among children based on the different characters portrayed in the story. (4 references) (DB)

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"With Mother" And Its Viewers:

Behavior Monitoring of 2 - and 3 year - olds

1988

NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)
Broadcasting Culture Research Institute

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"With Mother" And Its Viewers: Behavior Monitoring of 2 - and 3 year - olds

1988

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I . A Brief History of Studies on the TV Program "With Mother"

"With Mother" ("Okaasan to Issho") was started, as a highly educational TV variety series for preschool children, in October 1959 by NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), in response to the fact that children at home come in contact with TV for increasingly long hours. It was six years after the start of TV broadcasting service in Japan (in 1953). It was designed for viewing by small children before entrance to primary schools (under 5), along with their mothers.

This series has been enjoyed by a lot of Japanese children not only at home but also at kindergartens and nursery schools, and it is now the longest-running of all children's TV programs in Japan.

"With Mother" is a studio variety, 25 minutes long, consisting of several different segments such as a skit by performers disguised as animals, a game-and-song hosted by a young man and woman, children's exercises, animation, and films about children's daily lives. The main goals of this series are to enrich the imagination of preschool children and to help them socialize.

At present, this series is broadcast throughout Japan Monday through Saturday, from 9:30 in the morning on General TV Network with a rebroadcast at 5:00 p.m. on Educational Network.

Up until around 1980, the program was generally intended for preschoolers around age 4 or 5. But the target age of program viewers has been lowered, with increasing recognition of TV's educational impact on toddlers. We now believe it is essential to develop programs for little children from a completely new viewpoint.

Therefore, the production staff of NHK's "With Mother" and this NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute have been conducting joint studies in cooperation with the Research Project on Television Programming for 2-year-olds. This project -- headed by Dr. Tsune Shirai, Professor Emeritus of Tokyo Women's Christian University -- has so far done research on related programs, and such efforts have contributed to making "With Mother" by far the most popular program among toddlers. In fact, a survey of 2-year-olds conducted by this research institute in the Tokyo metropolitan area in October, 1987, showed this programs listed as the most favorite by 90 per cent of the boys and 95 per cent of the girls.

In 1985, at meetings of the Research Project on Television Programming for 2-year-olds, those of us concerned decided to create animation segments for small children on the basis of new concepts. We set educational goals for these segments and selected several appropriate characters. Members of the research group began with discussions on names for the characters.

Then, two short experimental segments were produced, and 100 small children participated in viewing experiments on these (March, 1986). Each segment won an attention rating of about 90 per cent.

Following minor changes of the content, production began for the series of short animated segments titled "Kids Like Us" ("Konna Ko Irukana"), and these have been included in "With Mother" since September, 1986.

The study and development of this animation are described in "Children and Television: A Study of New TV Programs for Children Based on the Pilot of an Animated Production" (1987) by T. Akiyama and S. I. Kodaira of the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute.

The series featured the following 6 characters in the beginning: Yadamon, the hard-to-please child who always says "No"; Pokke, the forgetful child; Tazura, the mischievous child; Mogumogu, the gluttonous child, Bururu, the timid child, and Poitto, the untidy child. There is also a dog named Pero and a cat Mia as sub-characters.

One of these characters appears daily for 6 days throughout all of one week to play a principal role. "Pero" and "Mia" play supporting roles, and do not necessarily appear each time.

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* As of April 1988, 6 more characters are included in the series "Kids Like Us."

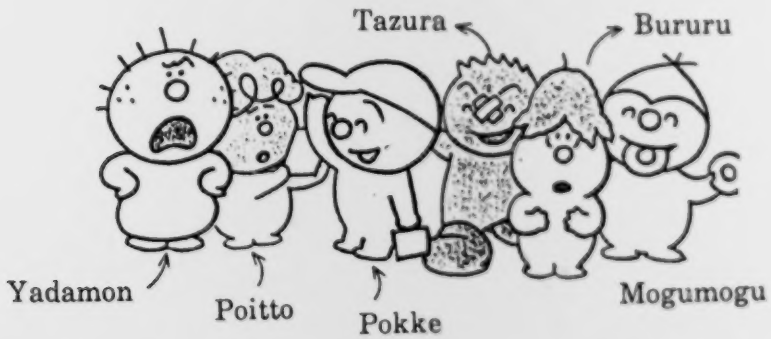
II. Aim of the Study

The animation series "Kids Like Us" was produced as a part of "With Mother" on the basis of research lasting 6 to 7 years, which started with a basic study of small children and TV images; so, the animation was expected to be highly successful. (The characters Yadamon and Tazura were used in the above mentioned viewing experiment in 1986.)

Although a high attention rating was obtained in the 1986 experiment, it was not known how children would react to the series when viewing it in their own homes.

Therefore, two surveys were conducted on how little children at home were attracted by "Kids Like Us" and what reactions they showed to the whole of the "With Mother." Children were monitored in their homes on two occasions, one 3 months and the other 6 months after the start of the animation series. Changes in children's reactions to the program were analyzed in various ways.

Changes in children's viewing behavior when they were provided with monthly magazines carrying stories about the same characters appearing in the animation segments, were also examined, in order to study possible effects of a media mix –a combination of TV and print media –.



Kids Like Us ©MI CE · K

III. Behavior Monitoring Surveys

1. Method

Survey I

On November 25 (Tues.) and 26 (Wed.) in 1986, the mother of each child involved was to observe the child watching the animation segment in the morning broadcast of "With Mother." (In that week, the character Yadamon was featured.) Surveyors visited the homes of the children involved several days before the monitoring days and handed over questionnaire and test cards to child's mother, while explaining the content and methods of the survey.

The mothers were asked not to show their children the test cards, on which "Yadamon" and other pictures were drawn, until the day of the survey. Then the mothers were to fill out and mail in the questionnaires recording their children's reactions.

The mothers of children in the "magazine" group (the half of the pollees) were given copies of the magazine titled "With Mother" (published by Kodansha, Ltd.)

Survey II

On one day during the 6-day period between February 16 (Mon.) and 21 (Sat.), in 1987, the children were to view either the morning broadcast or the afternoon rebroadcast of the program. (In that week, Mogumogu was featured in the "Kids Like Us.") The related questionnaires were mailed to the mothers. They were asked, again, to answer the questions, observing their children's reactions to the program.

At the time of the first survey, the pollees were not told of the second survey to be held 3 months later, and continued watching of "With Mother" was a matter of chance.

In both the first and second surveys, the mothers were not asked to do anything which might cause their children to pay special attention to "Kids Like Us."

The monthly magazine titled "NHK's With Mother" whose main target are children (0~3 years old) and their mothers (published by Kodansha, Ltd.) includes stories about the characters appearing in "Kids Like Us."

As mentioned above, children in the "magazine" group were given copies of the first issue of the magazine, which were delivered to their mothers when our researchers first visited their homes.

Then copies of the second and following issues were sent directly to those homes by the publishing firm. A total of four issues of the magazine were delivered to the homes of the pollees during the period of the surveys. However, the mothers were not specially requested to read the magazine for their children.

2. Child subjects

2-and 3-year olds residing in the Tokyo metropolitan area were selected by sex and age through a random sampling method (as shown in Table 1). Following the sampling, we asked each mother by telephone to view with her child the "With Mother" broadcast in the morning and then fill in the questionnaire. In this manner, a total of 300 little children -- six groups of 50 members -- were selected.

But, since 23 of them were later excused from the survey for one reason or other, the number of children sampled in the first survey totalled 277.

Three months after the first survey, questionnaires were sent to the 277 covered in the first survey. Of there, 254 (91.7 per cent) were covered in survey II .

Table 1 Ages of Children Surveyed and the Number of Valid Answers

(1)

	Age	Survey I			Survey II		
		Number of samples	Number of valid answers	Percentage of valid answers	Number of samples	Number of valid answers	Percentage of valid answers
	Total	300	277	92.3%	277	254	91.7%
BOYS	From 2 years to 2 years and 5 months	50	49	-	49	46	-
	From 2 years and 6 months to 2 years and 11 monts	50	45	-	45	38	-
	From 3 years to 3 years and 5 months	50	49	-	49	47	-
GIRLS	From 2 years to 2 years and 5 months	50	46	-	46	45	-
	From 2 years and 6 months to 2 years and 11 monts	50	43	-	43	35	-
	From 3 years to 3 years and 5 months	50	45	-	45	43	-

(2)

		Survey I			Survey II		
		Magazine group	No-magazine group	Total	Magazine group	No-magazine group	Total
	Total	136	140	276	129	125	254
Total	From 2 years to 2 years and 5 months	46	48	94	45	46	91
	From 2 years and 6 months to 2 years and 11 months	43	45	88	38	35	73
	From 3 years to 3 years and 5 months	47	47	94	46	44	90
BOYS	From 2 years to 2 years and 5 months	24	25	49	23	23	46
	From 2 years and 6 months to 2 years and 11 months	21	24	45	19	19	38
	From 3 years to 3 years and 5 months	25	24	49	24	23	47
GIRLS	From 2 years to 2 years and 5 months	22	23	45	22	23	45
	From 2 years and 6 months to 2 years and 11 months	22	21	43	19	16	35
	From 3 years to 3 years and 5 months	22	23	45	22	21	43

Note: "Age" indicates that at the time of Survey I

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3. Content of the surveys

(1) General questions on TV-viewing

(2) General questions on "With Mother"

(3) The child's reaction to each segment of the program

(4) The children's reactions to each character in "Kids Like Us"

(5) Tests concerning the characters

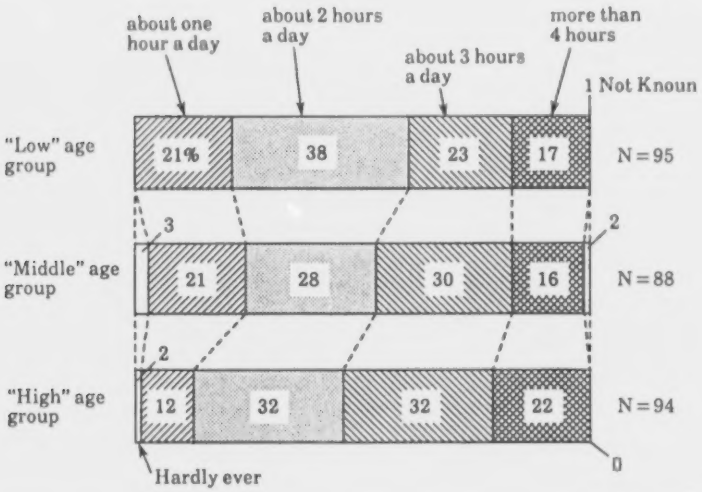
(6) General questions related to "Kids Like Us"

IV. How Is "With Mother" Usually Watched?

1. TV-viewing hours

The mothers were asked how long their children generally watch television each day, choosing from the five possible answers shown in Chart 1. In the "low" age category,* 17 per cent watch television for more than 4 hours a day, while about 40 per cent watch TV for more than 3 hours. In the "middle" age category, nearly half watch TV for more than 3 hours a day. And, TV-viewing hours become even longer in the "high" age group.

Chart 1 TV-viewing Hours
(Survey I)



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* In this report, children are classified in the following three age brackets:

- "Low" — 2 years to 2 years and 5 months
- "Middle" — 2 years and 6 months to 2 years and 11 months
- "High" — 3 years old to 3 years and 5 months old.

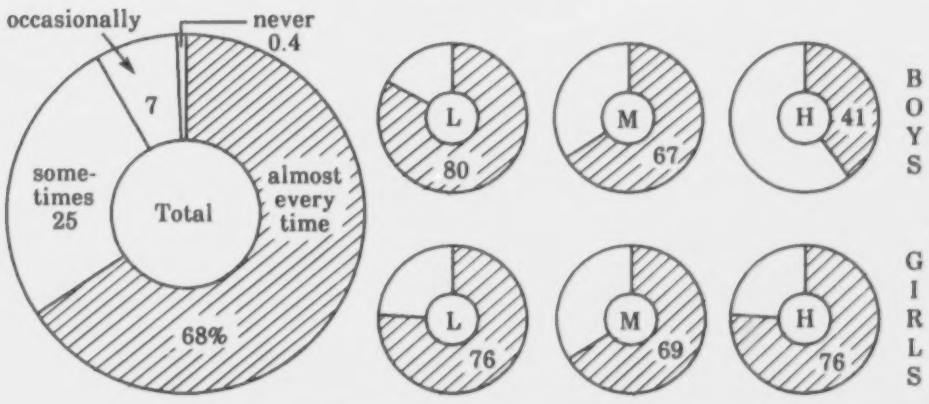
The ages listed in this report are those at the time of Survey I. (Nov. 1986)

2. Frequency of TV viewing

On the child's frequency of viewing "With Mother", each repondent was asked to select one of five possible answers (Chart 2): "almost every time", "sometimes", "occasionally", "never" or "I do not know about the program."

The number of those watching "almost every time" was dominant, accounting for 68 per cent. The second largest group, 25 per cent watch "sometimes." When those two groups are combined, they account for 93 per cent of the total. (In this survey, no respondent "I do not know about the program.")

Chart 2 Frequency of Viewing
"With Mother"
(Survey I)



Note : Only one of 277 respondents (0.4 percent) replied "never."

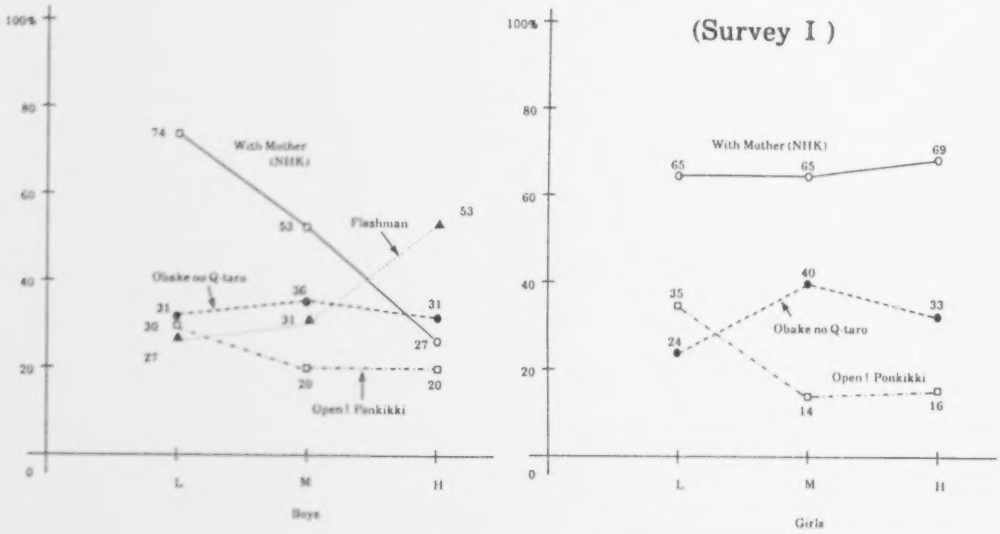
By gender and age, 80 per cent of boys and 76 per cent of girls in the "low" age bracket watch almost every time. In the "middle" age bracket, the ratio of boys and girls viewing almost every time declines somewhat. But, in the "high" age bracket, differences appear between boys and girls. In the case of boys, the percentage viewing almost every time falls to 41 per cent, below that in the "middle" age group, yet in the case of girls, the ratio of those

viewing almost every time remained high even in the"high" age bracket.

A similar tendency can be seen in Chart 3, regarding the children's favorite programs.

In the "low" age bracket, 74 percent of boys listed "With Mother" as their favorite program. The percentage is far greater than that of boys who favor cartoon programs. But in the "high" age bracket, a larger percentage of boys favor cartoon programs on commercial broadcasting stations. However, in the case of girls, no such tendency can be observed. In the "low" age bracket, 65 per cent of girls prefer "With Mother", and this percentage remains more or less unchanged in the "middle" and "high" age brackets.

Chart 3 Favorite TV Programs of 2-and 3-year- olds



Note: "Flashman" - super-hero "metamorphosis" drama
"Open! Ponkikki" - preschool series (Fuji television)
"Obake no Q-taro" - animation popular among children

3. Mothers and children viewing program together

Survey I also asked whether the mother and her child watch "With Mother" together (Table 2).

The percentage of children who watch almost every time together with their mothers generally declines as children get older. However, there is a distinct difference between the cases of boys and girls.

<Gender ratio of children "viewing together almost every time.">

	Total	"Low" age	"Middle" age	"High" age
BOYS	27%	41	27	14
GIRLS	34%	33	40	29

(survey I)

In the low age bracket, 41 per cent of boys viewed the program with their mother, almost every time. But this percentage declines gradually; only 14 per cent of boys in the "high" age bracket watch the program almost every time with their mothers. Again, this decline is less among girls, with 29 per cent of them in the "high" age bracket watching the program with their mothers.

Table 2 Mothers and Children Viewing Program Together

(Survey I)

(100% = Excluding any who have not watched "With Mother")

	Almost every day	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
"Low" age group	37%	46	16	1
"Middle" age group	33	35	32	0
"High" age group	21	49	28	2

4. Program-viewing hours

The respondents were asked whether their children generally watch the 9:30 a.m. or the 5:00 p.m. broadcast or both. (Table 3)

In this table, the "regular viewers" watch "With Mother" almost every time, while those watching less frequently are called "non-regular" viewers. As this table shows, 39 per cent of the regular viewers watch "With Mother" twice a day, both morning and evening.

Table 3 Time for Viewing "With Mother" (survey I)

(100% = Excluding any who have not watched "With Mother")

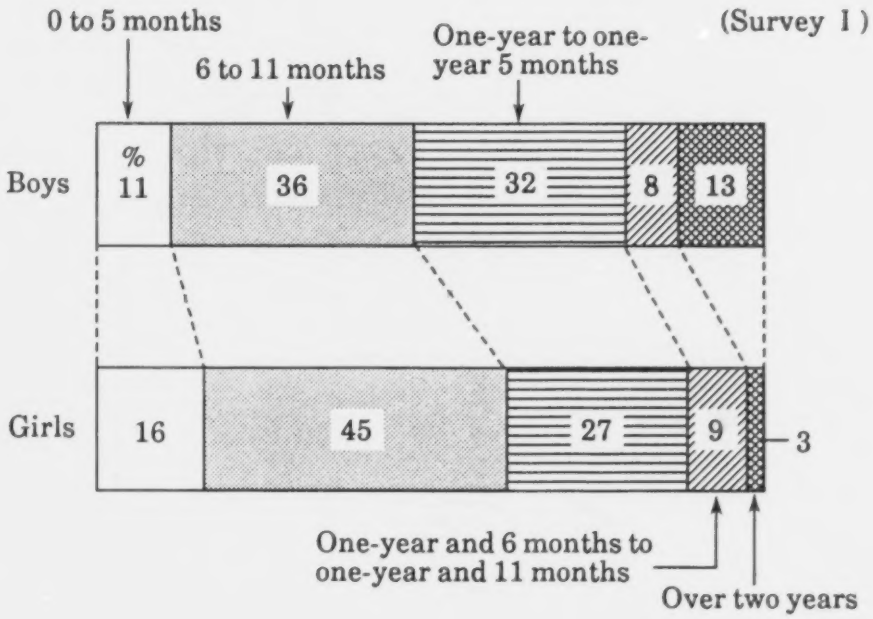
	Total N = 276	Regular viewers N = 188	Non-regular viewers N = 88
Mainly in the morning	30%	29	34
Mainly in the evening	16	15	17
Both in the morning and evening of the same day	27	39	2
Sometimes in the morning and sometimes in the evening	26	17	47

5. Age for the start of viewing the program

Chart 4 shows when children started viewing "With Mother." In the case of boys, 11 per cent began viewing the program when they were less than 5 months old. Then 36 percent started viewing the program when they were 6 to 11 months old. In short, nearly half began viewing even before their first birthday. Girls tend to start watching the program even a little earlier than boys.

The survey also asked about why children started watching "With Mother." In many cases, the parents intentionally encouraged their children to watch the program, or the children came to watch the program at the same time as their older brothers or sisters.

Chart 4 Age at Start of Viewing "With Mohter"



(100% = Excluding any who have not watched "With Mother")

V. Children and TV Programs

This study also explored children's reactions to TV programs in general.

1. Mimicry of hand-clapping and physical exercises

First, the mothers were asked whether or not children mimic hand-clapping or physical exercises shown during programs.

Chart 5 shows that such behavior is observed largely in the "low" age group from 2 years to 2 years and 5 months old. This tendency declines as children get older.

(We also conducted a survey in October, 1986, covering children from age one to 12; its data confirm the above finding.) By gender, the ratio of such mimicry is considerably higher among girls than boys, and is seen more often among regular viewers of "With Mother" than no-regular viewers.

2. Imitative role-playing

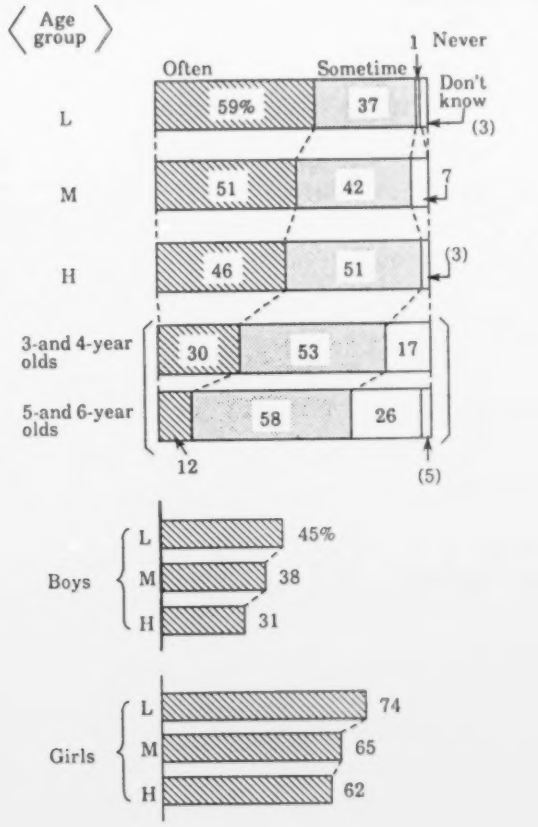
In contrast, imitative role-playing increases gradually as children get older. (Chart 6)

About 60 per cent of the children in the "high" age bracket, from 3 years to 3 years and 5 months old, sometimes or often imitate characters on TV. Ever since the start of TV broadcasting, concern has been expressed about small children jumping from high places or kickboxing as they imitate the actions of popular TV characters. According to our surveys such behaviors appears most among 3-year-olds, and declines as children get older.

By gender such role-playing is more prevalent among boys than girls, in contrast to the imitation of hand-clapping or physical exercises. Furthermore many TV programs favored by today's boys feature action scenes and adventures, which encourage role-playing.

Chart 5 Mimicry of Hand-clapping or Physical Exercises While Watching TV Programs

(Survey I)



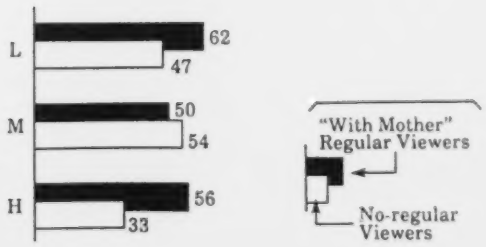
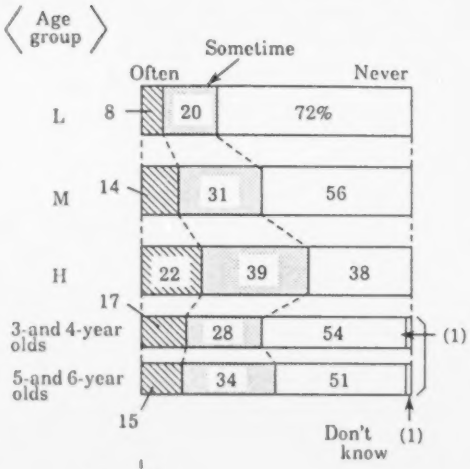
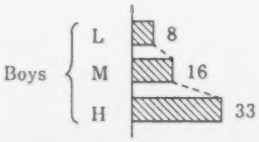


Chart 6 Role-playing to Imitate TV Characters

(Survey I)





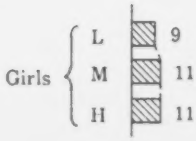
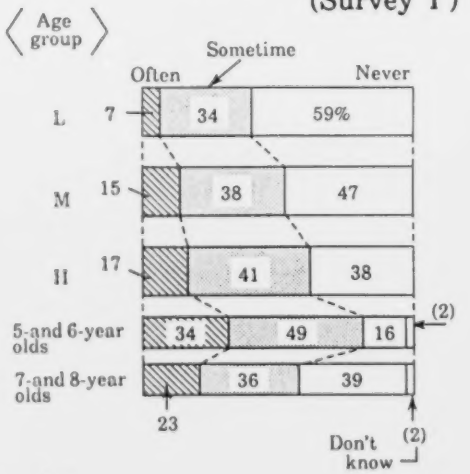


Chart 7 Learning Numerals From TV Programs

(Survey I)



3. Learning numerals from TV programs

Chart 7 shows the findings of this study and also the survey on a wider age range concerning the question of whether children learn numerals from TV programs.

In fact, 7 per cent of those even in the "low" age bracket often do so, and the percentage rises to a peak figure of 34 per cent among 5-and 6-year olds.

4. Discipline by mothers

Since small children start watching TV programs at such an early age, TV can be thought to have considerable influence on their behavior.

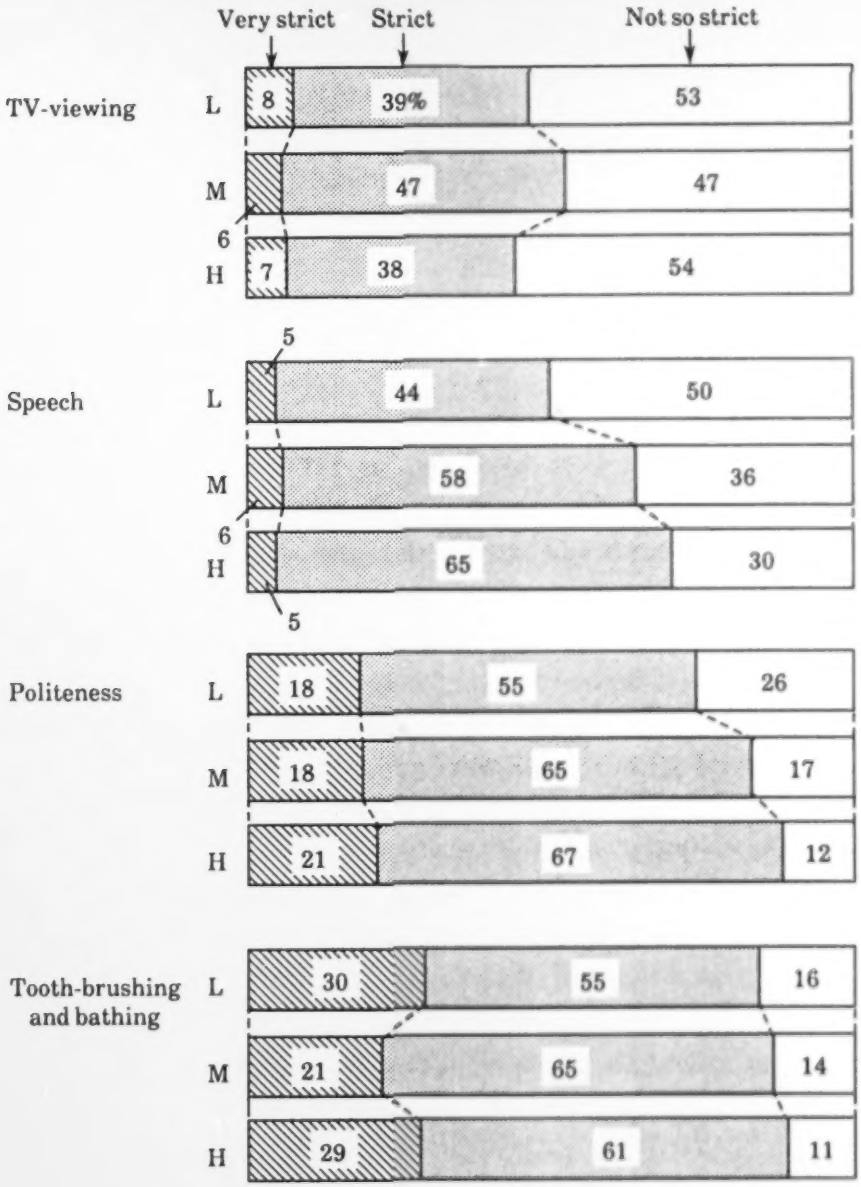
But how much do mothers control their children's TV-viewing, in comparison to other types of home discipline?

The mothers in our survey were asked to what extent their children are being disciplined in four areas -- "TV-viewing," "speech," "politeness (greetings)" and "tooth-brushing and bathing." (Chart 8)

In fact, mothers showed the most concern about "tooth-brushing and bathing," followed by "politeness." The percentage of the mothers who replied that their children are disciplined strictly (either "somewhat" or "very") in their speech is not as high. When it comes to "TV-viewings," the percentage of strict discipline becomes far smaller, only about a half of the respondents replied that their children are disciplined somewhat strictly or very strictly. Concerning "speech" and "politeness," discipline increases as children get older, but that tendency cannot be seen in the case of TV-viewing.

In short, mothers seem to give top priority to the health of their children, and their next concern is basic rules of human relations such as politeness.

Chart 8 Discipline of Children in Daily Life



5. Control of TV-viewing

Concerning TV-viewing hours, about a half of the mothers replied that they restrict TV-viewing hours for their children of all ages. The other mothers answered that their children are allowed to watch TV programs as they wish. (Chart 9)

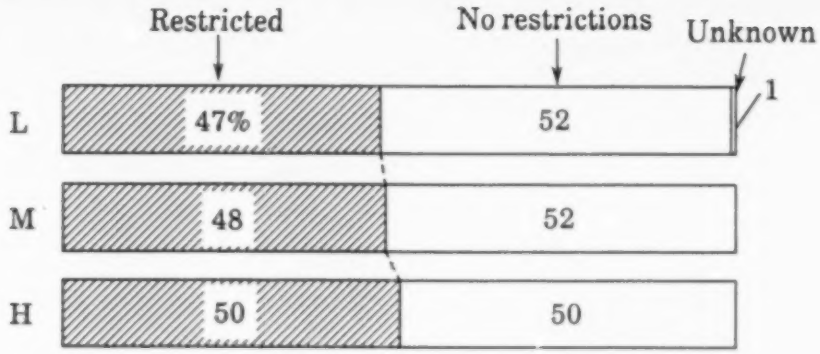
Roughly half of the mothers said that they forbid their children to watch certain programs. That percentage rises somewhat as children get older.

Concerning the child's distance from the TV set and his or her posture, some 80 per cent of the mothers replied that they give their children specific instructions.

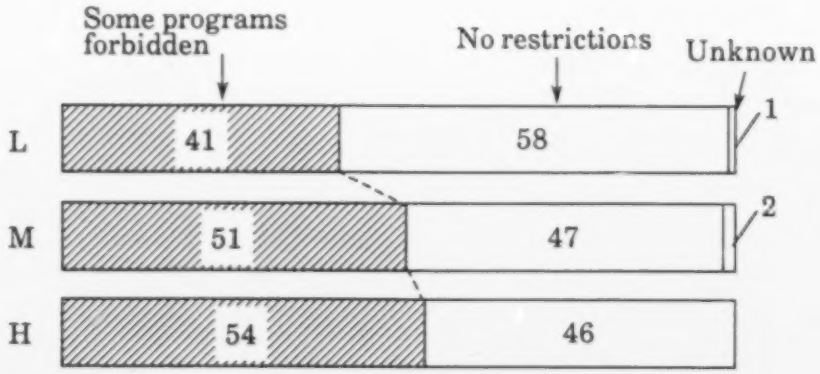
This also indicates that their greatest concern is the physical health of their children.

Chart 9 Control of TV-viewing

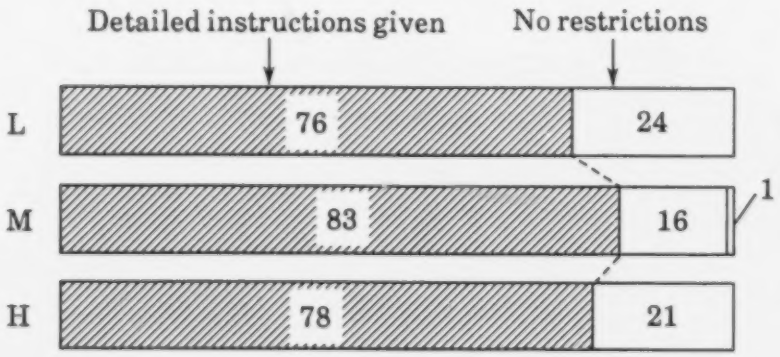
(1) TV-viewing hours



(2) Forbidden programs



(3) Child's position and posture when watching TV



VI. Comparison Between the Findings of the First and Second Surveys on Children's Reactions to "With Mother"

The two surveys, three months apart, showed major changes in the reactions of 2-and 3-year-olds to the new animated series "Kids Like Us" on the "With Mother" program.

The first survey was conducted three months after the start of this series, while the second survey came 6 months after its start.

The surveys also covered children's reactions to other segments of "With Mother."

1. Children's liking for each segment

Regarding each child's reactions to each of the 6 segments of "With Mother," the mothers were asked to choose one of the 5 possible replies -- "like it very much," "like it," "don't know," "dislike it" and "dislike it very much." (Surveys I and II)

Chart 10 shows major changes in the percentage of "like it very much" replies. (Almost no children seemed to dislike segments of the program.)

In the case of "Kids Like Us," only 21 percent of the children "liked it very much" in the first survey -- the lowest percentage among the 6 segments of the program.

But, that percentage jumped to 61 percent, the highest rate among the 6 segments, in the second survey.

Chart 11 shows that the degree of liking for this segment tends to rise rapidly in each age category of children.

Chart 10 Changes in Preference for Various Program Segments

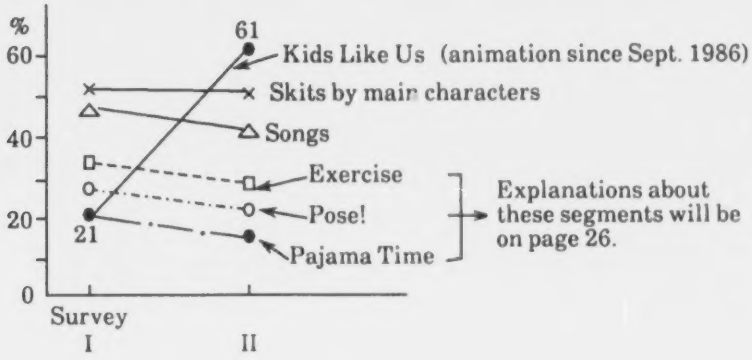
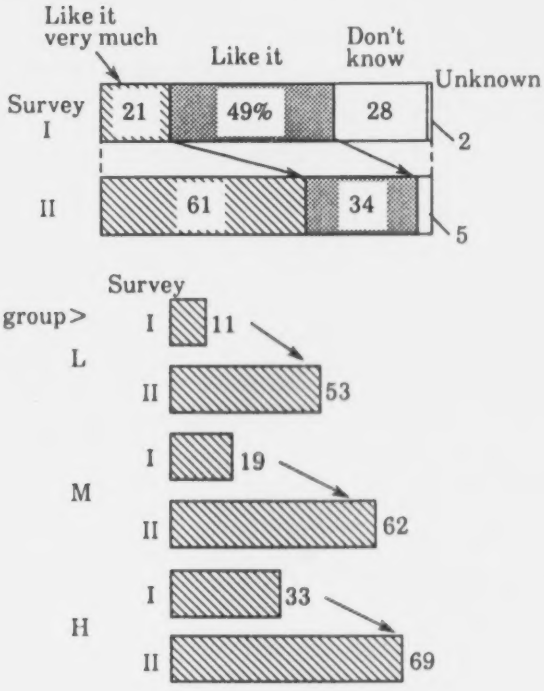


Chart 11 Changes in Preference for "Kids Like Us"



2. Degree of the children's attention

The mothers were asked to observe their children while watching "With Mother," then choose one out of the four replies "watching intently," "watching sometimes," "not watching often" and "never watching."

Chart 12 shows the ratios of the children who watched each segment "intently" in the first and second surveys. The ratio of those who watched "Kids Like Us" intently stood at about 90 per cent -- the highest rate among the 6 segments -- in both surveys.

A noteworthy difference between the two surveys is the sharp increase -- from 78% to 92% -- in the ratio of children in the "low" age bracket who watched "Kids Like Us" intently. (Chart 13.)

Chart 12 Changes in Attention Rate* By Segment

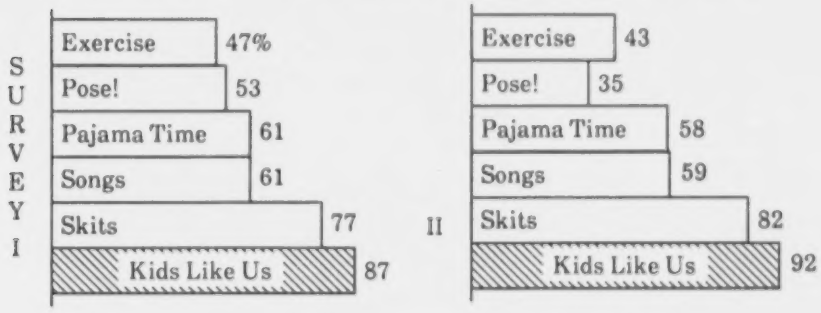
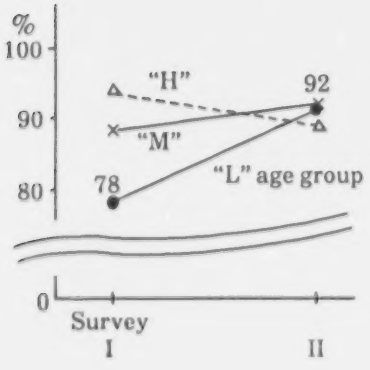


Chart 13 Attention Rate* for "Kids Like Us" By Age Group



* "Attention Rate" in Charts 12 and 13 means the ratio of children who watch each segment intently.

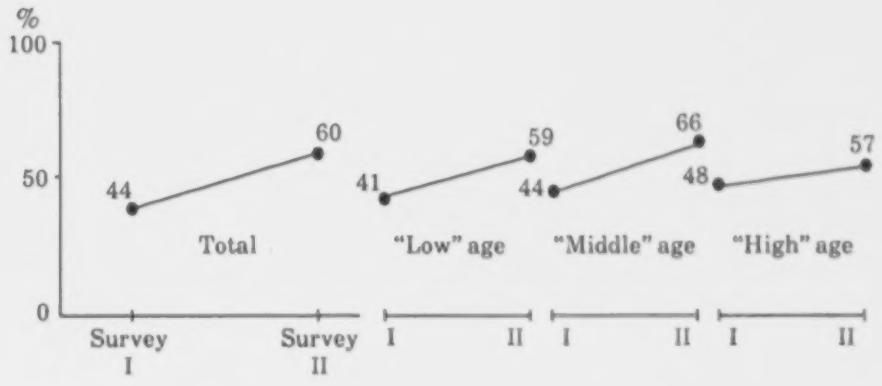
3. Pointing and smiling

While watching TV, little children not only fix their eyes on the screen but also tend to point at the screen, smile and talk to those who are watching TV with them.

Such behavior indicates that the children are positively involved with the contents of the program. Chart 14 shows changes in reactions to "Kids Like Us," in the two surveys three months apart. Finger-pointing or smiling increased in each of the three age brackets, especially "low" and "middle" age groups.

While Charts 10 and 11 indicate that more and more children came to like "Kids Like Us," Chart 14 shows the changes their physical reactions.

Chart 14 Changes in Finger-pointing and Smiling Behavior



4. Changes in children's character preference

In the surveys, we examined children's liking for the 6 main characters and 2 sub-characters appearing in the animated segments, "Kids Like Us."

The mothers were given beforehand sets of 8 postcard-sized cards, each with a drawing of one character on it. After their children had viewed the program, the mothers put the cards side by

side in front of them (in an order previously requested by the researchers) and asked them to point to certain ones.

In the second survey, the children were also asked to point out each of the 8 characters and name their favorites.

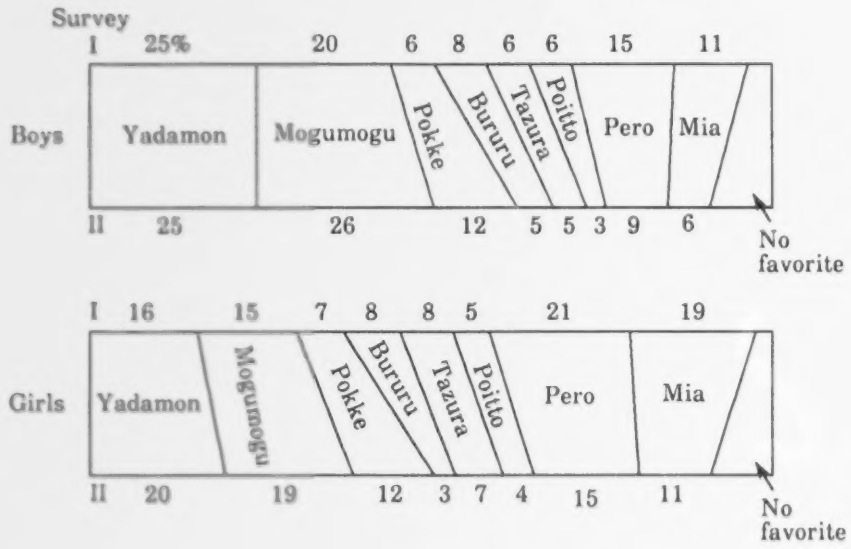
Chart 15 shows the changes of answers to this question from the first to second survey.

Around 50 percent of the boys in both surveys indicated that they like most the contrary Yadamon or the greedy Mogumogu. In the case of girls the first and second ranked favorite were the sub-characters of the dog Pero (21%) and the cat Mia (19%) in the first survey, followed by Yadamon and Mogumogu. But in the second survey, girls, too, ranked Yadamon and Mogumogu first and second, respectively.

Over the 3-month period, there was a decline in the percentage of children of both sexes who preferred Pero or Mia.

The characters whose popularity rating rose in particular were Yadamon, Mogumogu, and the forgetful Pokke.

Chart 15 Changes in Character Preference



5. Mimicking the segments "Pose!," "Pajama Time," and "Exercise"

Chart 12 (p.23) compared reactions to different segments of "With Mother," including "Pajama Time" ("Pajama de Ojama"), "Pose!" ("Hai, Pose!") and "Exercise" ("Taiso") from a viewpoint of children's attention to the TV screen. Children's physical reactions, such as body movements and striking poses while watching TV, were also analyzed by age and gender. (Charts 16, 17 and 18)

These charts indicate that girls show imitative behavior more often than boys, in the case of all these three segments. In the case of "Pose!" and "Exercises," mimicking behavior is most prevalent in the"low" age bracket (2 years to 2 years and 5 months); such behavior decreases as children get older. In particular, mimicking behavior decreases sharply among boys after they turn three.

In the case of "Pajama Time" 90 per cent of girls in the "low" age bracket began mimicking the behavior shown, by putting pajamas. But the parallel figure for boys in the same age bracket stands at less than 50 per cent. Cases of girls' putting on pajamas decreases slightly as they grow older, but similar behavior among boys increases as they get older.

---

* "Pose!" Yoga segment by a child and an adult yoga teacher.
"Pajama Time" a film segment to introduce a 2-year old child trying to wear pajama by himself (herself) at home.
"Exercise" children's exercise with a song in which around forty preschool children join each time.

These children are all amateur.

Chart 16 Putting on Pajamas After Watching "Pajama Time"

(Survey I)

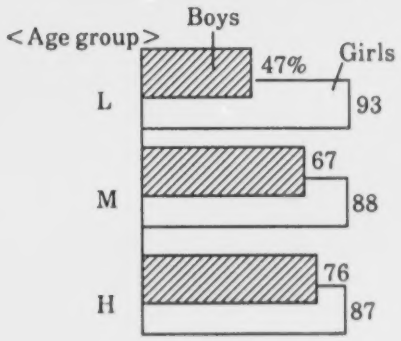


Chart 17 Body Movement and Striking Poses While Watching "Pose!"

(Survey I)

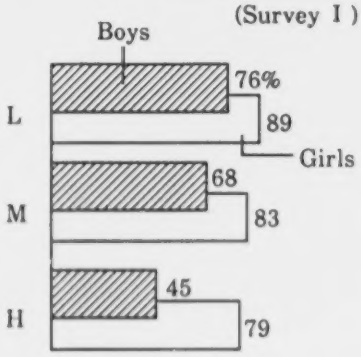
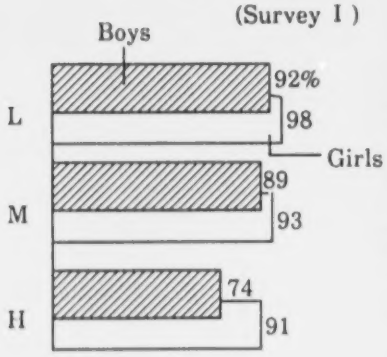


Chart 18 Body Movements and Striking Poses While Watching "Exercise"

(Survey I)



6. Character-recognition tests, concerning "Kids Like Us"

The two surveys included simple tests of the children's ability to distinguish drawings of the 8 characters appearing in "Kids Like Us." The test was held immediately after the mothers and children watched the animated segment together.

In Survey I, the mother put the 8 test cards side by side in front of the child (in the order earlier requested by the researchers), and then asked the child "Which character(s) did you see just now?" In Survey II, children were asked to point at the character(s) they watched on TV from among similar drawing printed on the questionnaire, in the same order as in the first survey.

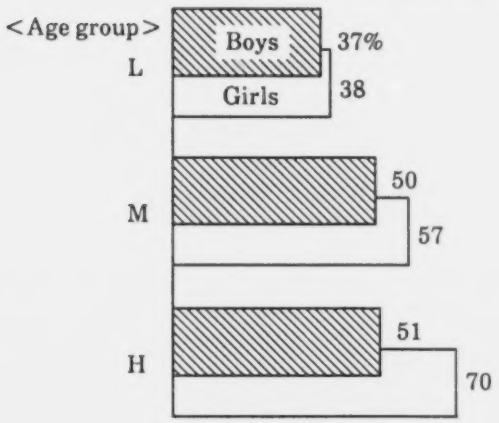
Chart 19 shows the outcome of survey II. During the week when the Survey II was conducted, Mogumogu appeared in different stories daily, either alone or with Pero and Mia.

In this test, the pollees were asked to watch any one of the "With Mother" programs broadcast in that week. So some children saw only Mogumogu, while others watched Mogumogu, Pero and Mia appear together. So, in this survey, only those who correctly identified all the characters who appeared were classified as giving the correct answer.

In the "low" age group, less than 40 per cent of both boys and girls answered correctly. But in the case of girls, nearly 60 per cent of those in the "middle" age bracket and 70 per cent of those in the "high" age group answered correctly. In contrast, only about 50 per cent of boys in both the "middle" and "high" age brackets gave correct answers.

Chart 19 Children's Recognition of Characters

(Survey II)



7. Reactions to "Kids Like Us"

Chart 20 summarizes changes in children's reactions to these animated segments during the 3-month period.

Children of both sexes who came to like this animation very much account for 70 to 90 per cent of the total in all age brackets (1). The percentage of children who came to talk about the stories even when they were not watching the program is particularly high in the "high" age bracket, reaching 81 per cent among the girls (2). Furthermore, the theme song of "Kids Like Us" seems to have become very popular among 2-and 3-year-olds; the ratio of those who sing it ranges from 40 to 70 per cent, rising in the "high" age bracket (4).

The observation notes prepared by the mothers often included comments like the following;

* My daughter brings up Tazura and Yadamon often in her conversations. (Regarding a girl 2 years and 6 months old)
* "My boy began to make up similar stories by himself."

(A boy 2 years and 10 months old)

* "My son talks about the characters of "Kids Like Us" any time he finds something that remind him of them. He sometimes criticizes others for similar behavior after observing them closely" (A boy 3 years and 7 months old)
* "My boy began to bring me the magazine for "With Mother" after watching the TV program and ask me to read it, opening its pages to pictures of "Kids Like Us." (A boy 3 years old)
* "My daughter recently became able to tell all 6 characters apart."

(A girl 2 years 6 months old)

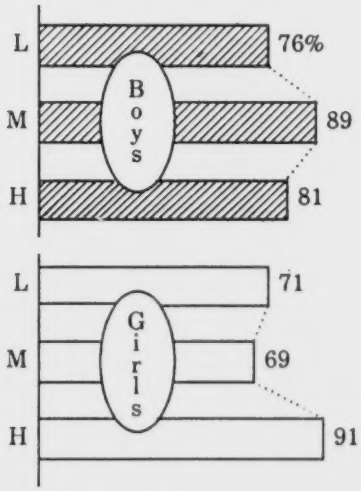
* "My daughter calls herself Mogumogu when she has a good meal, and calls her 9-month old brother Tazura when he is mischievous. (A girl 3 years and 7 months old)
* "My daughter looks forward to the character appearing daily, and knows the names of all the characters. She says with sparkling eyes 'That one is no good but that other one is good.' (A girl 2 years and 2 months old)

In this survey, the children were also asked to draw their favorite characters. Drawing pictures of the characters of "Kids Like Us" has infact became a pastime for some 2-and 3-year-olds, too.

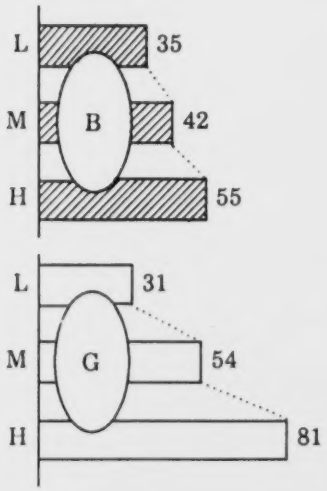
Chart 20 Reactions to "Kids Like Us"

(Survey II)

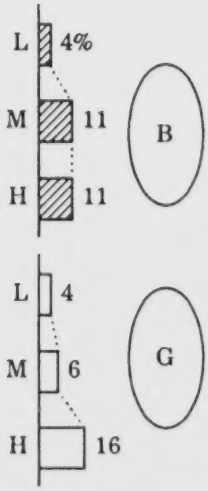
(1) Coming to like it very much



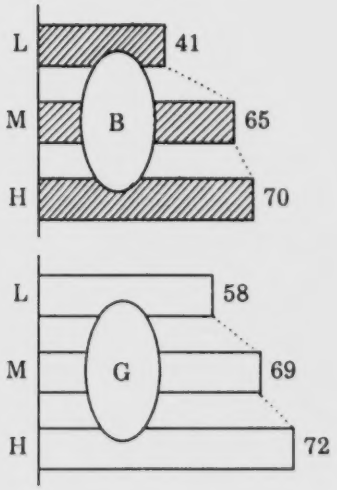
(2) Coming to talk about the stories even when not watching TV



(3) Coming to draw the characters



(4) Coming to sing the theme song



8. Mimicking the characters and understanding the intended meaning

Soon after the start of the series "Kids Like Us," some mothers complained that their children were becoming disobedient, often saying "Yadamon." (besides being the name of one character, this also means "No, I don't want to.")

In the second survey, 6 months after the start of the program, the children's reactions were classified as shown in Chart 21.

The ratio of children who mimick the word "Yadamon" tops 50 per cent in each age group of both sexes. In particular, such behavior is very prevalent among boys of the "low" and "middle" age brackets.

On the other hand, the ratio of small children who can understand that the behavior of Yadamon is undesirable increases sharply as they get older. Girls of all age brackets are a little more critical of Yadamon's behavior than boys of the same age.

The ratio of such girls in the high age group at 79%, or some 20% more than those who tend to mimic the word "Yadamon."

As Chart 21 shows, a considerable number of children believe that Yadamon's behavior is not good, even though they mimic the word "Yadamon."

Mothers were asked to describe freely their children's reactions, and some of their replies were as follows;

* "I'm troubled because my son always says Yadamon. (No, I don't want to)" (A boy 2 years and 6 months old)
* "Although my boy always says Yadamon, Yadamon, he is becoming tidy." (A boy 2 years and 9 months old)
* "My boy is becoming generous enough to lend his toys to his friends after repeatedly watching Yadamon." (A boy 3 years and 3 months old)

As in the case of Yadamon, girls began to grasp the intended meaning of the Poitto stories at an age about 6 months younger than boys (Chart 21). Mothers wrote;

* "My daughter came to put trash into a litter box by herself after she watched Poitto." (A girl 2 years and 4 months old)
* "My daughter, after seeing her older sister throw down something says, "no good, it's like Poitto." (A girl 2 years and 9 months old)

Table 4 shows how the degree of understanding of other four characters increases as children get older.

In this case, too, the degree of girls' understanding is generally higher than that of boys. Here are some more comments from mothers;

* "Every morning, my boy began to tell his brother, a primary school pupil, not forget anything. (A boy 2 and a half years old)
* "My daughter, seeing Tazura do mischief, expresses sympathy for his victims." (A girl 2 years and 9 months old)
* "My daughter became able to slide down a slide by herself after watching Bururu. (A girl 2 years and 4 months old)

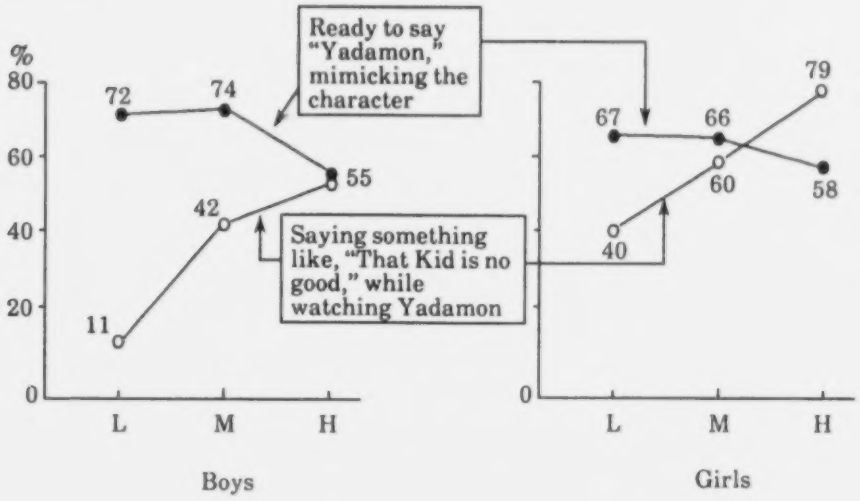
The following note from one mother indicates that "Kids Like Us" can not only causes small children to mimic particular actions but also exert influence on the whole character of a child.

* "My boy likes Yadamon and Bururu who resemble him because they have weak points which he was ashamed of. He seems to have become more self-confident than before as he realized that other people have also weak points like his." (A boy 3 years and 3 months old)

Chart 21 Mimicking the Characters in "Kids Like Us" and Understanding the Inteded Meaning

(Survey II)

[1] About Yadamon



[2] About Poitto

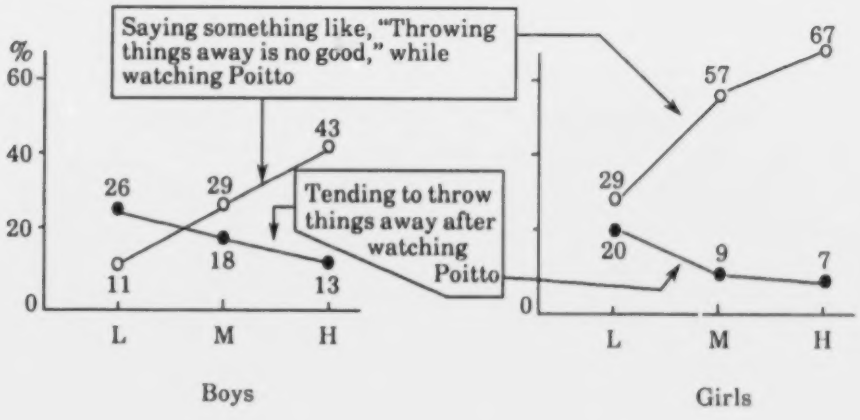


Table 4 Understanding the Characters of "Kids Like Us"

(Survey II)

		"Low" age group	"Middle" age group	"High" age group
◦ Saying something like "Don't be so forgetful," when watching Pokke	Boys	9%	21	36
	Girls	22	60	47
◦ Saying something like "Don't be so mischievous," when watching Tazura	Boys	13	40	47
	Girls	33	57	67
◦ Saying something like "Don't be timid," when watching Bururu	Boys	4	16	21
	Girls	18	23	42
◦ Saying something like "It's not good to eat nothing but candy," when watching Mogumogu	Boys	4	16	11
	Girls	11	14	23

Ⅶ. Children Supplied With a "Media Mix"

Some of the children in our surveys were supplied with monthly magazines carrying stories of the same characters as those appearing in "With Mother," and their reactions were compared with those children who did not receive the magazines. The aim was to study possible changes in children's behavior while viewing "With Mother," especially the segment "Kids Like Us."

1. Changes children's viewing behavior

In the first survey, 68.8% of small children replied were watching "With Mother" almost every day. As Table 5 shows, children who were watching almost every day increased by 7% (68.6% → 75.2%) in the "magazine" group and 13% (67.1% → 80.0%) in the "no-magazine" group during the 3-month period between the first and second surveys. (This rise may also be attributed to their mothers' increasing interest in the program, they were asked to observe the children's behavior.)

In a age-group comparison of changes in the viewing behavior between the "magazine" and "no-magazine" groups, children aged between 2 years and 6 months old and 3 years and 5 months old in the "no-magazine" group showed a higher rate of increase in watching than those in the "magazine" group.

Rather surprisingly, this indicates that children who did not receive the monthly magazine about "With Mother" showed a higher degree of concern about the TV program than children in the "magazine" group.

2. Children's reactions to "Kids Like Us"

In our survey, the mothers were asked to describe their children's reactions to the following 6 segments, on a five-stage scale from "like it very much" to "dislike it very much."

Table 5 Ratio of Children Who Watch "With Mother" Almost Every Day

	Magazine group		No-magazine group	
	Survey I	Survey II	Survey I	Survey II
Total	68.6%	75.2	67.1	80.0
"Low" Age group	78.2	84.4	77.1	87.0
"Middle" Age group	74.4	81.6	62.2	81.4
"High" Age group	53.2	60.9	61.8	79.5

Table 6 Ratio of Cildren Who Like "Kids Like Us" Very Much

	Magazine group		No-magazine group	
	Survey I	Survey II	Survey I	Survey II
Total	25.0%	59.7	17.1	63.2
"Low" Age group	10.9	48.9	10.4	58.7
"Middle" Age group	30.2	60.5	8.9	62.9
"High" Age group	34.0	69.6	31.9	68.2

Table 7 Attention Rates for "Kids Like Us"

	Magazine group		No-magazine group	
	Survey I	Survey II	Survey I	Survey II
Total	86.2%	89.9	87.6	93.6
"Low" Age group	79.7	91.1	71.4	93.5
"Middle" Age group	88.3	94.7	89.3	91.4
"High" Age group	92.6	84.8	95.0	95.5

(1) Skits by host characters (Jajamaru, Pikkoro and Porori)

(2) "Pajama Time"

(3) "Kids Like Us"

(4) "Pose!"

(5) "Songs"

(6) "Exercise"

Table 6, on children's reactions to "Kids Like Us," shows that the percentage of those who "like it very much" increased in all age groups during the survey. The rate of increase was greater among children in the "no-magazine" group, particularly in the middle age bracket.

3. Attention rate for "Kids Like Us"

Concerning small children's reactions to the above-listed 6 segments of "With Mother," their mothers were asked to choose one of 4 replies -- "watching intently", "watching sometimes", "not watching much" and "never watching." (Table 7)

The degree of attention to "Kids Like Us" tended to increase during the period between the first and second surveys. But no marked difference could be seen between the "magazine" and "no-magazine" groups.

4. Other changes

In our surveys, many children imitated actions in the "Pose!" and "Exercise" segments, but , again, no marked difference in such behavior was observed between the "magazine" and "no-magazine" groups.

In other words, giving additional printed information on a given TV program to small children seems to no change in their direct reactions to the program.

5. Overall changes in children's reactions to "Kids Like Us"

We also examined whether children's overall reactions to "Kids Like us" changed or not during the 3-month period. (Tables 8, 9)

As Table 8 shows, the ratio of children who "like it very much" increased markedly during the period.

The percentage of children who came to like it very much is slightly higher in the "magazine" group than in the "no-magazine group, although no significant statistical differences were seen in any age group.

However, there were marked differences concerning children's behavior in talking about the stories of "Kids Like Us" even when they were not watching "With Mother." (Table 9)

The relevant percentage for all the children polled stood at 56.6% for the "magazine" group and 42.4% for the "no-magazine" group. And, the "magazine" group children, provided with additional information through the monthly magazine, showed more positive behavior when talking about "Kids Like Us."

By gender and age, boys in the low and middle age brackets and girls the middle and high age groups in the "magazine" group showed a higher percentage of talking about the stories.

We also examined children's behavior of drawing pictures of "Kids Like Us" as well as their tendency to want products decorated with pictures of the characters.

While we found no differences in picture drawing between the two groups, but the ratio of those wanting products stood at 41% for the "magazine" group and 24% for the "no-magazine" group.

Table 8 Changes in Liking "Kids Like Us" Over the 3-month Period

(Survey II)

	Magazine group	No-magazine group
Total	82.9%	75.4
"Low" age group	77.8	69.6
"Middle" age group	81.6	74.3
"High" age group	89.1	81.8

Table 9 Talking About Stories of "Kids Like Us"

(Survey II)

		Magazine group	No-magazine group
	Total	56.6%	42.4
Boys	"Low" age group	47.8	21.7
	"Middle" age group	52.6	31.6
	"High" age group	58.3	52.2
Girls	"Low" age group	31.8	30.4
	"Middle" age group	63.2	43.8
	"High" age group	86.4	76.2

Ⅷ. Concluding Remarks

We have examined from various angles how 2-and 3-year-olds respond to "Kids Like Us."

First it became clear that the children show interest and concern about the characters in this series, and that interest continued to increase as they kept on watching the program.

It seems fairly difficult for children in the "low" age bracket to understand the stories, but the degree of understanding increases sharply when children reach the age from 2 years and 6 months to 3 years.

In order to produce "Kids Like Us," the related production staff of NHK, the NHK's Research Institute and university researchers formed a joint team and first made basic studies of children in the age range for which this program is intended. On the basis of such research, we discussed what television can do for such young children. We then produced an experimental program and revised its contents after a series of tests.

In follow-up surveys held after the start of broadcasting "Kids Like Us," it was found to be very popular among 2-and 3-year-olds, more or less achieving the projected goals.

But, further studies must be made on the following problems.

Firstly, the 8 characters in "Kids Like Us" are not liked equally by 2-and 3-year-olds; children's favorable reactions tend to center on two or three of them. What elements in the other characters cause unfavorable reactions? Is there some problem in their drawing or coloring, or in their actions?

Secondly, 3-year-olds reacted more favorably to "Kids Like Us," although the program was intended mainly for 2-year-olds. Is it difficult for any TV animation to have direct influence on 2-year-olds? Is there any room for improving the animation itself? Or

should we feel content with the current level of children's reactions?

We think that research must be continued to answer these questions.

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